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Wednesday, 14 February 2001, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Recent floods in Bolivia and earthquake in El Salvador

The President: Before turning to the items on our agenda, may I, on behalf of the members of the Assembly, extend to the Governments and the peoples of Bolivia and El Salvador our deepest sympathy for the tragic loss of life and the extensive material damage resulting from the recent floods in Bolivia and yet another earthquake in El Salvador. May I also express the hope that the international community will demonstrate its solidarity by responding promptly and generously to any request from Bolivia and El Salvador for assistance in their present plight.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/55/745/Add.1)

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/55/745/Add.1. In the letter contained in that document, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/55/745, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Turkmenistan have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolution (A/55/L.74)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.74.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to Bolivia as a result of the flooding experienced in recent months", which has been published under the symbol A/55/L.74. I am pleased to announce that all the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States — Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and

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Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela and Costa Rica — have sponsored the draft resolution.

Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey have also become sponsors of the draft resolution.

The adoption of this draft resolution is a matter of urgency. In recent weeks, Bolivia has been the victim of a true humanitarian crisis. Torrential rain in the northern part of the country has led to extensive flooding and landslides. The loss of human life has been enormous and the material destruction is immeasurable. It has been estimated that more than 40,000 families have been made homeless and that more than 200,000 people have been displaced. Not only have these displaced persons lost all of their possessions and their means of subsistence, but they are now being threatened by various infectious diseases and epidemics.

The international community has the moral duty to provide assistance to this population in danger. It is crucial to provide these displaced persons with basic goods for their survival. Bolivia therefore urgently requires food, emergency medicines, tents, water purification units, basic tools, waterproof clothing, water pumps, emergency electricity generators, basic cooking equipment and educational material. The draft resolution under consideration includes such a plea to the international community and urges it to respond generously to the needs of the Bolivian population.

In the preambular part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly expresses its concern about the humanitarian crisis that has occurred in Bolivia. It highlights the efforts of the Government of Bolivia to provide assistance to the victims of the crisis as well as its achievements in the area of democracy and human development. Finally, the preambular part emphasizes the importance of international cooperation to remedy the effects of humanitarian crises, given the enormous financial and technical resources that such work requires.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly reiterates its support to the people and the Government of Bolivia, and thanks the international community for the support that it has provided for rescue and relief efforts for the stricken population. In paragraph 3, States Members of the United Nations, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations are urged to respond generously to Bolivia in its reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. Finally, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to promote and coordinate the assistance provided by the United Nations system to Bolivia at this difficult time.

I should like to conclude by strongly urging all delegations to support the draft resolution and asking them for their utmost cooperation with the brotherly people of Bolivia.

I should also like to make a plea for international solidarity with regard to the disaster that has again affected the brotherly country of El Salvador. As has been said, yesterday the Republic of El Salvador was again struck by a violent earthquake — the second time that that has happened in several weeks — and international support is urgently required.

I should like to take this opportunity to join you, Mr. President, in expressing my most sincere condolences to the brotherly people of El Salvador and to call on the international community to provide the necessary assistance.

Mr. Norström (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) on agenda item 20 (b), on assistance to Bolivia as a result of the flooding experienced in recent months.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union has been deeply moved by the reports on the flood and mudslide disaster in Bolivia. Thousands of people have been affected; homes and crops have been destroyed and roads damaged. The EU expresses its deepest sympathy for the victims, their families and all the people affected by the disaster in Bolivia over the past month.

An expert from the European Commission was urgently dispatched to Bolivia some days ago in order to assess the situation on the ground. Information gathered by the expert is now being analysed in Brussels, and concrete support will soon be announced.

The European Union would like to emphasize the importance of efficient coordination among donors and international organizations in supporting the relief and reconstruction efforts of the national authorities and local organizations. In order to help the affected people in the long term, reconstruction and development activities are essential. This includes further strengthening local response capacities.

The European Union will welcome the adoption of the draft resolution on assistance to Bolivia, and is proud to join the list of sponsors.

The President: I should like to announce that, since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.74: Bhutan, Egypt, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom.

The President: I call on the representative of the United States of America.

Mrs. Shestack (United States of America): In consultation with the delegation of Bolivia, agreement has been reached on a minor grammatical amendment to draft resolution A/55/L.74.

In the fourth preambular paragraph, we would propose that the words "supplement national efforts and undertake" be replaced by the words "supplement national efforts to undertake". That would clearly indicate that it is national efforts at reconstruction and redevelopment that the international community is supposed to be supplementing, rather than implying, as the existing text does, that the international community is supposed to undertake reconstruction and redevelopment. We believe that that would be a vast improvement to the text and would give it more clarity.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.74, entitled "Assistance to Bolivia as a result of the flooding experienced in recent months", as orally amended. I wish to announce that the delegations of Germany and the Netherlands have become sponsors of the draft resolution.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.74, as orally amended?

Draft resolution A/55/L.74, as orally amended, was adopted (resolution 55/241).

The President: I call on the representative of Bolivia.

Ms. López de Mitre (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people and the Government of Bolivia, I should like to express my deep gratitude for the demonstration of solidarity and support provided by the international community to my country, which is currently experiencing great difficulties. I should also like to thank you, Mr. President, for your comments, and for your willingness to deal with this sensitive matter.

The President: I call on the representative of El Salvador.

Mr. Andino Salazar (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first of all, Mr. President, to thank you for your expression of condolences in connection with the second earthquake to shake my country in less than a month, and for your plea to the international community to furnish the needed emergency assistance. I take this opportunity also to thank the representative of Costa Rica for his expression of solidarity; we are grateful too for the solidarity of all States Members of the United Nations in connection with this second natural disaster to strike my country recently.

We are convinced that, with our own national efforts, with the determination of all the people of El Salvador and with the support of the international community, we will succeed in overcoming this national tragedy.

I further take this opportunity to appeal to the international community for assistance with the needs that must now be met in El Salvador in the aftermath of this second earthquake, and, if I may, I should like to list a number of requests for assistance from the international community, urgently communicated to me last night by my Government.

We need to equip shelters for people seriously affected by the second earthquake. The Government of El Salvador has already taken steps to save people who have been buried. Steps have been taken to evacuate the injured, and temporary hospitals are being set up to treat injuries. Temporary shelters are being constructed.

We would request of the international community the following items as a matter of urgency: tents; ambulances; water; food; water-purification equipment; surgical assistance; catheters; health-care teams; stretchers and gurneys for transporting patients;

doctors, surgeons and orthopaedic specialists; hand-held lamps; medical support staff; medicines; cooking equipment; electricity generators; sutures and bandages; tarpaulins; earth-moving equipment, earth loaders and dump trucks; lighting towers; and construction materials.

Those are the immediate needs that must be met in connection with this second earthquake.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Draft decision (A/55/L.73)

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/55/L.73, which was recommended for adoption by the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/55/L.73, entitled "Arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session of the General Assembly on children".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/55/L.73?

Draft decision A/55/L.73 was adopted.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 42.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.